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Show Me Agriculture

Let's Celebrate!

Do you know what is special about the week of March 14 - 20? Well, some of you might say that the week is special because St. Patrick's day is that week, or maybe someone you know has a birthday or other special occasion that week. However, this is a special week for everyone because it is National Agriculture week! Maybe you are thinking - "**So what?**" or "**Big Deal**". But let's think about it for a moment. Most Missourians do not live on farms, but all Missourians like to eat good food and wear nice clothes. And where did that food and those clothes come from? Well from Agriculture, of course! Missouri Agriculture is huge. In 1997, Missouri farms produced nearly 6 billion dollars worth of farm products. Can you write that number? \$_____ Of that amount, 1 1/2 billion dollars came from exports. Exports are products that Missouri produced, but were then sent to other countries.

Of the 6 billion dollars of all Missouri Farm products, which of the following best represents the portion that was exported?



One Tenth



One Fourth



One Half



Three Fourths

Look at the following illustrations. You will see some Missouri food products and clothing items. Try to tell what agricultural product each might have come from.

1



2



3



4



5



6



A Look Back at Missouri's Agricultural History



Laura Ingalls Wilder was a famous Missouri author. In one of her books, Laura told of the terrible damage done by millions of grasshoppers to the crops near her childhood home in Minnesota. Did you know that similar grasshopper problems were experienced by Missouri pioneers?

Read the following letters. They are real letters written by real Missourians more than 120 years ago. After you have read the letters, discuss the questions with your teacher or class.

We are having terrible times in this county now. The grasshoppers have destroyed the country; there is scarcely a green shrub in the country. All of our crops are destroyed, and there is no prospect of the hoppers leaving. Our town is being threatened with a raid by the starving people from the county.

Written by a Butler, MO merchant to the St. Louis Globe-Democrat—May 19, 1875

Jasper County – On the 2nd of October, the grasshoppers made their first appearance here, coming from southwest and going northeast, in such numbers as to, in a measure, obscure the sun's rays. They stayed here in millions, until killed by cold; eating up all growing wheat and green grass. The ground was perforated in all directions with innumerable holds, and I suppose they deposited eggs in great abundance. We are in the eastern part of the county, a few miles from the Lawrence county line.

Letter from J. M. Thornburg, Reeds, MO—December 8, 1876

Myriads of grasshoppers were passing over Granby, from southwest to northeast on Sunday and Monday, the 8th and 9th. A glance upward towards the sun revealed them filling the air as far as vision could extend, as thick as snowflakes in a storm, and they drifted along with the breeze, and fluttered down at your feet occasionally, or lit on your nose, with as much unconcern as if they had been a part of the elements. The bushes and sides of the road were speedily thick with them.

St. Louis Republican—October 1, 1876

Q What choices do you think these early Missouri farmers had in order to deal with the grasshopper pests?

A

Q

How do we control insect pests today?

A

Q

Why do you think that we do not have grasshopper problems like this today?

A

This is a photograph taken about 100 years ago that shows real grasshoppers and what is left of a plant.

Want to know more about the grasshopper plagues? Ask your teacher or librarian to help you get one of the following books:

"On the Banks of Plum Creek",
by Laura Ingalls Wilder, 1953.

"Grasshopper Summer"
by Ann Turner, 1991.



In the space below, draw a picture of that shows something about the grasshopper plague.